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How many Persons
were present with Our Blessed Lord
at the Last Supper?

*SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE ABOVE
QUESTION*

BY
A LAYMAN

"Life is not long enough to do more than our best, whatever that may be. They who are ever taking aim make no hits. They who never venture never gain. To be ever safe is to be ever feeble, and to do some substantial good is a compensation for much incidental imperfection."

Rev. J. H. Newman, 1854.

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With Mr. Charles Feu's
compliments, — who will be
much obliged by the favor
of any remarks that may
occur to you on perusal.

Lavington
Putney Heath
2nd Dec^r 1878.

J. G. Talbot Reg



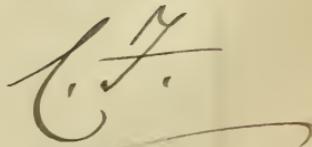
PREFACE

I SEND this fragment to the press with extreme hesitation and diffidence, especially being a layman; but the question has so ingrained itself into my mind, that I feel constrained to put it forward for consideration.

I sincerely hope I have not used any phrase or word inconsistent with the reverence due to so sacred a subject.

If I have unwittingly erred in that respect, the reader must kindly overlook it as incidental imperfection.

LONDON, November, 1878.



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How many Persons were present with Our Blessed Lord at the Last Supper?

THE above question has been on my mind for several years, and having thought it out to the best of my ability, I now venture reverentially to invite consideration of what is really a very important subject.

I cannot find that the question has ever been raised. I asked Canon — last spring whether he could refer me to any books on the subject, but he told me that, so far as he knew, the point had never been mooted.

It seems to have been taken for granted on, as I suppose, the two texts, (1) “In the evening He cometh with the Twelve,” (2) “He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him,” that only the Twelve were present with our Lord at the Last Supper; but I submit that there is nothing in the context to show that the number then present was absolutely limited to the Twelve, and that both quotations only go to the extent, and that their language would be satisfied by the statement, that all the Twelve were then present.

If more than the Twelve were then present,

important points would flow out of that fact, but into which it is not the province of this little pamphlet to enter.

In considering the question, we must dismiss from our minds all preconceived ideas and foregone conclusions about it, and the teachings of Leonardo da Vinci and all other painters: they either represent the Last Supper as being attended by only the twelve Apostles, or they depict the eleven, Judas being supposed to have previously retired, or being shewn going out in the background.

We must, so far as we can, enter upon the inquiry as if now started for the first time, and see what information we can glean from the New Testament for our guidance.

Let me, then, submit for consideration the following remarks, giving the view which has ultimately forced itself on my mind, and in so doing I desire to call attention to the fact that the twelve Apostles are not often separately referred to in the Gospels. I have a strong impression that many minds fail to appreciate the distinction which (as appears to me) should be drawn, in reading the Gospels, between the words "Disciples" and "Apostles."

The word "disciples" does not of itself exclude the general body of disciples who accompanied our Lord as distinguished from the Twelve.

Beginning, then, at the baptism of John the Baptist, when S. Andrew and another of John's disciples (whose name is not given) followed our Saviour, we are informed by S. Matthew that Matt. iv. 25. great multitudes of people followed our Lord from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judæa, and from beyond Jordan. And S. Mark states to the same effect, viz.: A great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Mark iii. 7. Judæa, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumæa, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things He did, came unto Him: and we are also told that He was without in desert Mark i. 45. places, and the people came to Him from every quarter.

Now it is important to observe that this happened before our Lord chose the Twelve. We Mark iii. 13. find that He called unto Him His disciples whom He would [apparently a great many], and they came unto Him, and of them He chose Twelve; Luke vi. 13. or, as S. Mark states, He ordained Twelve, whom Mark iii. 14. also He named Apostles, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and Mark iii. 15. to cast out devils. Here should be noted the distinction made between Disciples and Apostles, the latter having been chosen out of the general body of the former, and thus we see He had a general body of disciples, besides an inner circle Luke vi. 17.

(so to speak) of Twelve, whom He designated Apostles.

Luke vii. 11. Again: When our Saviour went into the city called Nain, we read that many of His disciples went with Him [which must surely mean His disciples generally, and not solely the Twelve],

Luke viii. 1. and much people; we are also told that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God, and the Twelve were with Him, and certain women, &c. . These words do not negative the supposition that His general disciples were with Him in addition to the Twelve.

Mark iv. 10. Again: We read that when He was alone, they that were about Him with the Twelve asked of Him the parable of the sower.

This is an important statement. Here the word “*alone*” only refers to the absence of the general multitude, because we are expressly told that other disciples were then about Him besides the Twelve.

Matt. xiii. 10. S. Matthew puts it generally,—the disciples came and said unto Him, Why speakest Thou unto them in parables? &c.: here the word “disciples” clearly represents more than the Twelve.

Matt. viii. 23. Again: When our Saviour crossed the sea of Galilee to go to the country of the Gadarenes, He entered into a ship, and His disciples followed Him; but there were also with Him [that is, accompanying or following Him] other little ships, which we may reasonably suppose contained other

disciples; there is nothing in the context to contradict this view.

We now come to Christ's commission to the twelve Apostles, on which the Rev. George Townsend, in his work on the New Testament, p. 170. states (in a foot-note), "Our Lord had now continued His ministry till the whole population of Judæa, Samaria, and Galilee, had heard of His miracles and preaching. Many had followed Him from place to place, and from these He selected Twelve as the constant witnesses of His actions;" also, that our Lord "gave the first commission to His Apostles to proceed to the House of Israel, and declare to them that their Messiah had come, and to preach to them the Kingdom of God. Our Lord afterwards sent out the Seventy to prepare the people for His reception, enjoining them to preach in those cities only which Himself intended to visit; whereas the Apostles were commanded to preach to all the lost sheep of the House of Israel."

Matt. x. 5.
Mark vi. 7-14.
Luke ix. 1-7.
Ed. 1838,
p. 170.

Ed. 1838,
p. 171.

Luke x. 1.

On the return of the Twelve, they gathered Mark vi. 30. themselves together and told our Saviour all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.

It would seem to be clear, as a general proposition, that other disciples accompanied our Lord in His various mission-work besides the Twelve, because we find that after He made the declaration

John vi. 66.

with reference to His being the Living Bread, many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him, on which He addressed Himself to the Twelve, “Will ye also go away?” &c.

I believe many persons do not sufficiently grasp in their mind the fact that our Lord appears to have been generally accompanied by a multitude of people in His public ministrations besides His disciples, but view His journeys and healings as if He were only in company with the Twelve and perhaps some of the inhabitants of the village in which He happened to be. I have set out in the Appendix some references bearing on this point.

I now refer to the important record of Christ’s announcing to His disciples the necessity of His

Matt. xvi. 21. death and resurrection; viz.: “From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples how

He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many

Mark viii. 32. things,” &c., and He spake that saying openly.

Surely this was to His disciples generally, and probably also to the general multitude.

Matt. xviii. 1. Again: When the disciples contended for

Mark ix. 33.

Luke ix. 46.

superiority, it would seem that other disciples formed part of the company as well as the Twelve, although the Twelve appear to have had the pre-eminence given to them. Yet at the same time it must be observed that “in the recognition of the spiritual teaching and mission of Christ, the Apostles made very slow progress, held back as

they were by weakness of apprehension and by natural prejudices: they were compelled to ask of Him the explanation of even His simplest parables, and openly confessed their weakness of faith. On His apprehension they all forsook Him, and fled. They left His burial to one who was not of their number, and to the women, and were only convinced of His resurrection on the very plainest proofs furnished by Himself.”¹

When the Seventy returned to our Saviour, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name, He gave further power to them, viz.: “Behold, I give unto you power Luke x. 19. to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”

The exact period of their going out and of their return appears to be uncertain, and it has (I believe) been suggested that after their return they went back to their ordinary occupations of life; but there is nothing to be found in the Gospels to that effect, and one would rather suppose, and it would certainly seem to be more natural, that, having carried out an express mission given to them by our Lord in person, and having had fresh or further power given to them by Him on their return from such mission, they would have continued to be His disciples and

¹ Quoted from Dr. WM. SMITH’s *Dictionary of the Bible*, title “Apostle.”

would have accompanied Him in His after ministrations.

Luke xviii. 31. Again: When our Saviour was going up to Jerusalem for the last time, we read that He took unto Him the Twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, &c., and S. Matthew distinctly tells us that He took the twelve disciples apart in the way; from which we may reasonably infer that the number of disciples who were then following Him much exceeded twelve.

Matt. xx. 17. Luke xix. 37. Again: When Christ had arrived at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the Matt. xxi. 9. disciples and the multitudes that went before and that followed began to rejoice. These words evidently show that a great many disciples were present besides the twelve Apostles, as the phrase "the whole multitude of the disciples" is very comprehensive, and must surely mean a great company.

We now come to the period to which the question of this little pamphlet refers.

On Maundy Thursday our Saviour sent forth Mark xiv. 13. two of His disciples, who S. Luke informs us were Luke xxii. 8. S. Peter and S. John, to prepare the Passover in a large upper room furnished and prepared, which would be shewn to them.

The following are the different translations of that sentence, which has an important bearing on the present question.

S. Mark xiv. 14.

The maistir seith, where is myn etynge place Wiclis, 1380.
where I schal ete paske with my disciplis, and
he schal schewe to you a greet soupinge place
araied.

a greate parlour paved and prepared.

Tyndale, 1534.

a greate parlour, which is paued and prepared.

Coverdale,

1535.

a greate parlour, paued and prepared.

Cranmer,

1539.

an vpper chamber which is large, trimmed and Geneva, 1557.
prepared.

a great chamber, adorned.

Rheims, 1582.

a large vpper roome furnished, and prepared.

Authorised,
1611.

S. Luke xxii. 12.

a great soupynge place strewid.

Wiclis, 1380.

a greate parloure paved.

Tyndale, 1534.

a greate parlour paued.

Coverdale,

1535.

a greate parloure paued.

Cranmer,

1539.

a great hie chamber trimmed.

Geneva, 1557.

a great refectorie adorned.

Rheims, 1582.

a large vpper roume furnished.

Authorised,
1611.

A “large upper room” would not, I submit, be needed for only thirteen persons, or at all events would not be of sufficient importance to be recorded.

Mark xiv. 17. In the evening of that day He cometh with the Twelve, or, according to S. Luke, He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him.

Now I venture to submit that there is nothing in this language to negative the proposition that others were then present besides the Twelve: on the contrary, we may reverentially entertain the opinion that on the occasion of such a solemn act as was then about to take place, when the Mosaic dispensation with its types and shadows was about to pass away, and a new and spiritual kingdom, with new rites, new teachings, and new sacraments, was about to be inaugurated for the whole world, to last until the end of time, the declarations and the acts of our Blessed Lord would not have been limited to the Twelve, but would have been manifested to all, or at any rate a great portion of the Seventy (who had been out on mission work on His express appointment, and to *Luke x. 17-20.* whom He had given special power after their return, as already stated, equal in fact to the power with which the Twelve had been endued), so that their own eyes might see and their own ears might hear the Christian dispensation then about to be founded.

This view has a corroboration in the words of our Lord, Who, on being asked at the table who it *Mark xiv. 20.* was who should betray Him, stated, "It is one of the Twelve that dippeth with Me in the dish." I reverentially submit that under that language it is

reasonable to suppose that others were present besides the Twelve, otherwise the reply would be satisfied with the words, “It is one of you.”

But our Lord had already stated, “One of you shall betray Me.”

If many disciples were then present,¹ as well as the Twelve, the declaration that “One of you shall betray Me” would be addressed to all then assembled round the table in that large upper room; whereupon all would reply with the question, Is it I? Is it I? To which came the mournful answer, “It is one of the Twelve.” Thereupon, the announcement being thus limited to the Twelve John xiii. 24. who was next to our Lord, to ask who it should be of whom He spake.

If this contention be admissible, it gives increased importance to the fact that the Cup was given to Matt. xxvi. 27. all who were present, and it is expressly recorded Mark xiv. 23. that they all drank of it.

There are many places in the Gospels where the word “disciples” is used to which I have not called attention, as this paper is a mere fragment put forth in the hope of drawing attention to the question now propounded: for instance, when S. Peter asserts that he will not deny our Lord, it Matt. xxvi. 35. is stated, “likewise also said all the disciples;”

¹ We find a somewhat similar illustration in the Old Testament, where Moses went up, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw God, and did eat and drink. Exod. xxiv. 9. Exod. xxiv. 11.

- John xviii. 1. and again, He went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which He entered, and His disciples ; and we are John xviii. 2. told that this was a place whither Jesus oftentimes resorted with His disciples. Again, we read that after our Saviour was taken, all the disciples Matt. xxvi. 56. forsook Him, and fled.

There is nothing in any of these references to show that the word “disciples” is intended to be limited to the Twelve, but, on the contrary, it would seem to be used as applying to the general body of disciples.

- If the general body of disciples went into the Garden on the eve of Maundy Thursday (and there is nothing to show that they did not), that fact would give force to the announcement that Mark xiv. 43. Judas at the betrayal had with him “a great multitude with swords and staves, from the Chief Priests,” &c.—a great multitude of armed men would not surely have been required as against Christ with only the Eleven, and two swords, and only one of them to be seized and taken to prison. Matt. xxvi. 55. S. Matthew uses the expression, multitudes ; Luke xxii. 47. and S. Luke, a multitude.

Again : A pre-arranged mode of identifying the Matt. xxvi. 48. Person to be taken,—“Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He,”—would be necessary if He had to be singled out from a numerous body of disciples,—but (I submit) not, if the whole number was only twelve.

I now ask attention to Cleopas and another ^{Luke xxiv. 13.} disciple who journeyed to Emmaus on the day of the resurrection.

It appears that they knew all those things ^{Luke xxiv. 14.} which had happened, and it is quite clear from what they stated to our Lord on the journey that they had been well acquainted with Him, and had companied with the Apostles on the morning of that day, for they reported what had happened to "certain women of our company who made us ^{Luke xxiv. 22.} astonished, which were early at the sepulchre," and again, that "certain of them which were with ^{Luke xxiv. 24.} us went to the sepulchre;" and they knew the result, "Him they saw not." That being so, the message of the angel in the sepulchre, "Tell His ^{Mark xvi. 7.} disciples and Peter," would not be intended merely for the Eleven, but (as I apprehend) for the general ^{Luke xxiv. 9.} body of disciples.

Lastly and chiefly, I desire to point to what took place on the occasion of the appointment of ^{Acts i. 13-26.} S. Matthias, and especially to the language of verses 21 and 22 of Acts i., which has in fact finally influenced me in coming to the conclusion suggested above.

If we are to give full effect to the important statement contained in those two verses, the view now put forward would appear to be a natural consequent.

We here find that the eleven Apostles abode in

an upper room, and that they all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren. And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, whose number is stated to have been about an hundred and twenty, and he made an address, expressly stating that of these men (evidently referring to the 120 disciples) "*which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection :*" whereupon, out of the men then present they appointed two, and proceeded (after prayer) to the election of one of them by lot.

Here we have it on distinct record that all, or at any rate the great majority of those then present, had companied our Lord in all His ministrations prior to the choosing of the Twelve, and had continued with Him up to the day of His Ascension, and, as such, could testify personally with the Apostles to His resurrection.

Is it, then, unreasonable to suppose, or is there anything in any of the Gospels negativing the proposition, that they formed part of those who partook of the Last Supper? And if we take the plain and positive language of the verses 21 and 22, can we do otherwise than come to the conclu-

sion that where the word "disciples" is used in the Gospels, it is (as a general rule) intended to refer to a considerable number of persons beyond and in addition to the Twelve, and did it not probably include all, or at any rate the chief portion of the Seventy?

The phrase "*all the time*," beginning from the baptism of John unto the day of the Ascension, is very comprehensive and explicit, and unless language is to be found in one or other of the four Gospels expressly declaring to the contrary, the contention now submitted would appear to be correct.

This paper, being a mere fragment, is purposely limited to a brief reference to material facts bearing on the single point raised, with a few observations thereon, and the question is now submitted to those who may feel an interest in the subject.

But I do not think anyone can look at it calmly and dispassionately, unless he can put on one side all preconceived notions, and take up the question as quite an original idea.

The matter seems to range itself under three heads :

1. Is the proposition now put forward maintainable under the language of the Gospels ?
2. If maintainable, is it improbable ?
3. If not improbable, is it not probable, having

regard to the general use of the word “disciples” throughout the Gospels, and to the distinct language of verses 21 and 22, Acts i.?

Matt. xxviii.
16.

If the proposition be sound, its significance would extend to the question whether only the eleven Apostles were present on the occasion of our Saviour’s Ascension, which is thus recorded by S. Matthew, “Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them,” &c.

Writers and painters represent the Ascension as taking place in the presence of only the eleven Apostles, and the Virgin Mary; but it seems clear from the quoted verses in Acts i. that there was a considerable company of disciples present at that time (including Barsabas and Matthias). I desire, however, to limit this little pamphlet to the single question which I have propounded for consideration.

Magna est veritas et prevalebit.

APPENDIX

The people sought Him, and came unto Him, and stayed Him, Luke iv. 42. that He should not depart from them.

The people pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God. Luke v. 1.

At even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all Mark i. 32. that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.

And all the city was gathered together at the door.

He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that Matt. viii. 16. were sick.

He went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and Matt. iv. 23. preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

His fame went throughout all Syria : and they brought unto Matt. iv. 24. Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy ; and He healed them.

And there followed 'Him great multitudes of people from Matt. iv. 25. Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judæa, and from beyond Jordan.

The man cured of leprosy began to publish his cure much, Mark i. 45. and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places : and they came to Him from every quarter.

Many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no Mark ii. 2. room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door.

All the multitude resorted unto Him [by the sea-side], and Mark ii. 13. He taught them.

A great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judæa, Mark iii. 7. and from Jerusalem, and from Idumæa, and from beyond Jordan ; Mark iii. 8. and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things He did, came unto Him. And He Mark iii. 9.

spake to His disciples, that a small ship should wait on Him because of the multitude, lest they should throng Him.

Mark iii. 10. For He had healed many; insomuch that they pressed [marginal rendering "rushed"] upon Him for to touch Him, as many as had plagues.

Luke vi. 17. He came down with the Twelve, and stood in the plain, and the company of His disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judæa and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre

Luke vi. 18. and Sidon, which came to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases; and they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed.

Luke vi. 19. The whole multitude sought to touch Him: for there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all.

Matt. viii. 18. Jesus saw great multitudes about Him.

Luke viii. 4. Much people were gathered together, and were come to Him out of every city.

Mark v. 31. The multitude thronged Him.

Mark vi. 31. There were many coming and going, and they [that is, our Lord and the disciples] had no leisure so much as to eat.

Mark viii. 2. I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat.

Mark viii. 3. Divers of them came from far.

John x. 41. Many resorted unto Him [that is, beyond Jordan], and many believed on Him there.

John x. 42. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after Him.

John xii. 19.

